

Informer: LMP-S23

English

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Transcriber: J. Dominguez

S23: ...any of the articles and it's always some, let me put my glasses on; I can't see a thing without them...

CH: I should start getting that do you subscribe to it?

S23: No, it's free, no it's free, well, here they give it out at church but the businesses get them on Thursday...

CH: Vida Nueva.

S23: and it's won awards for it's documentary. It's ahhh...photojournalism

CH: How often does it come out?

S23: Weekly. Let me see if it has some this week. But, I started cutting them out and then I realized I liked whole so I just starting saving them and I have a lot. This week it doesn't have any. But it talks about immigration, the effects of laws...it's just excellent, I wish there was an English language comparable to that because it really talks about the issues that confront the community.

CH: There are...I'm gland it's in Spanish so that people in Spanish speaking communities have something to read, you know. INAUDIBLE...there is not enough information made available.

S23: This one is pretty INAUDIBLE, but the "INAUDIBLE" Victor Aleman he's won many awards, photography awards and Pulitzer prizes for some of the articles and pictures.

TAPE CUTS and RESTARTS

S23: ...If you want to just look at it because I can get it at the corner? Oh, sometimes, like the special issues I get two because I may cut them out and use them.

J: Let's talk about INAUDIBLE, Sam...INAUDIBLE...I have two different headsets here, neither one of them is very good, but that doesn't have anything to do with it. I want to change batteries.

CH: Oh, on the microphone.

J: Right, let me see if that has any affect.

S23: I spoke to M----- and said....

TAPE CUTS OFF and RESTARTS

J: Usually our equipment works better than this...

S23: "Las Plantas que Curan" (The Plants that Cure) was published in 1954 I believe and she bought it from a vendor, my mother-in-law did too, so I think I have my mother-in-law's. I liked it because I found a few of the plants my mother used with Spanish name. But it was published in South America so some things I had to really look for the name that I recognized, you know. So that one has helped me for cost referencing and getting the Botanica, so that I could find it. It just got me to take out all the resources that I have...

CH: practice...

S23: Yeah, just going back to it. I've done, I've several time have gotten into just learning and writing down what I know.

J: So, I no longer had the trouble with the up and down with the sound but...

S23: I could turn it off.

J: Well, when it turns towards you then...

S23: I think I could make it...fix it...

J: ...toward the ceiling...

S23: ...Make it work.

J: ...point it in one direction.

S23: Yes, in one direction, see if I know how to do this. (pause). Technology is really...(laughter)...yeah...ok, should I put...

J: INAUDIBLE

S23: ...Sarah!! Sarah!! Come here girl, where are you? This is my granddaughter, I have two of my other grandchildren but they are in the front house, I told them I had...You know on my dresser there is a, I believe there is an old green book, could you get to me please?

CH: In Spanish...it has a guide...

S23: Yes, there is always some article related to health or mostly the plants.

J: OK, great now we know how to do it for next time. OK, so you have a list of plants.

S23: Yes I do.

J: Good.

S23: I starting making my own list and then I should have written here because then I would see which ones I (inaudible) and I really didn't finish because I had done all these other (inaudible) I got into INAUDIBLE.

CH: INAUDIBLE

S23: INAUDIBLE, "Las Plantas que Curan" inaudible

J: INAUDIBLE, But this is a different set.

CH: Oh, well I see why.

(laughter)

S23: I didn't know this.

J: Like you said about technology...

S23: Yes, Oh my god, if I didn't have my children becoming...saving me from that computer, I just know very basic things and once it goes off I go without using it for a day until comes in and says, all you had to do was (inaudible), I can't figure it out.

J: We haven't talked about plants yet.

S23: Well, one thing that I use in my office is a lot of natural things, symbolic things, especially when...

J: INAUDIBLE your recorder or microphone?

CH: No

J: CH! The back up remember?

CH: I know, I'm sorry. It was that last minute phone call with my mom.

J: S23, say something else...

S23: Well, I hope that you could get things going and see if...

(Microphone being tossed around)

S23: Well, I don't have any equipment that you could use

J: It's fine now, so maybe it's this silly headset. No. Talk again.

S23: Well, I use a lot of plants, especially dried plants, because usually they (inaudible) a long time...Can you hear me?

CH: Yeah, I can hear you.

S23: But does it just go off?

CH: It's good, I think it's these actually.

J: It comes and goes. Keep talking tell me about that photograph there by the light, what's that all about?

S23: Well that was the house that my children grew up in, it was my mothers home, just down the street up on the hill. It was a wonderful home, it was a really funky house because it needed a lot of repair but we lived there for such little rent, so my kids, when I left that house and came here, I only lived in these two houses when I started having children. The older one stayed there until they moved out. One of my sons took a photograph of it and I had a lot of these very rustic, I had this old trunk in there and so that's the front porch.

CH: It's a great shot.

S23: yeah

CH: And the sound is good too.

J: It stays consistent it didn't drop down.

CH: Yes, I think maybe when you push this and just making sure that this is on.

J: OK, my technician. All right, sounds fine.

S23: OK, I'll try not to move too much.

J: No, that's fine.

CH: I think it was the headphones.

J: We really desperately need another set. But I want to make sure it's not the microphone.

CH: Yeah

J: Ok, so I think it's all right now

CH: It's a very nice picture.

S23: Yes, the other one was...

CH: He took photography?

S23: Yeah, they dabble, there good photographers, I have about three of them who do that.

CH: And this is the book that.

S23: That was my mother-in-law's but my mother bought it in 1954 or 56, I can't remember when and this was my mother's but it did have some of the plants. At the time when I got this way back in the 70's I had never found anything that had Mugwort (estafiate) and then this one does. In later books I've found it, as far as being identified, mostly there called wormwoods or, I forget the other one, 'Mother's Wort,' it has several names and of course there are several varieties and the leaves are the ones that's different.

J: You want to hold that title page up J-----

CH: Yep.

J: See what it is.

S23: 'Las Plantas Curan' I think its Argentinean, I don't remember.

CH: It's printed in Brazil.

S23: Brazil, Brazil, it's says so. Then I looked for the website at UCLA. Every time I can get on the computer I've been going, I say it's more stuff for my own research for my own information and my goal is to someday is to just do this and put it on list and say this is for what and say what is called and here it's being done by I didn't know it was being done. I hadn't looked into it until J—D---- got her book finished and she was really happy with it and this small information. I hadn't looked on the Internet for it until, this past week.

CH: There are a lot.

J: Yes, of course we are interested what comes from your own experience, what plants your raising and what you are growing yourself and the stories you have to tell about what you know has been used.

CH: Do you want to start with your list?

S23: Yeah. Let's start with the ones I have and then the ones I started remembering that I would like to have but my mother would use and so besides plants I also had edible plants that I don't grow but that we buy at the market, here we go. 'Aloe Vera' (Savila) that's a big one, I find it all the time in books. I have a big plant in the front, it was actually on the ground but when they remodeled the house I took it out it because when they were going to remodel and stuff they were going to dump plaster in that area so I put it in a pot and it's been there ever since I just got a little chute and put it on another plant, so I didn't put it back on the ground, because it does take up a lot of room but all of us use it, my daughter and then my chiropractor and actually I'm teaching my children, because like me, I got away from plants when I was a teenager, I got to be too cool and skeptical until I started having children, of course if I had a real problem, which I've been pretty healthy, I would call my mother or my mother would say what I should take. I have a lot of skin problems, growing up, so I would always refer to what she had. When I was in high school I had ringworm and she used garlic and it burned like hell. Then she would put 'Yodo' (iodine), there was a purple medicine, it was unsightly so I would put, I didn't want to go to school with this big blotch, so then I would camouflage it and so I can't use that medicine anymore so I would just take the garlic and, oh my God, but it did help.

CH: How did you use the garlic?

S23: Just under like that.

CH: Just took the head of garlic?

S23: Mashed up, it always had to be macerated because it exudes and it burns and my daughter E---- she uses garlic for everything, it is so strong I had never taken it just raw like that, she makes it, like, 2 or 3 cloves and put it's in a little bit of water, it's for my sore throat and it's very, because it's an antibiotic in a way it has the properties that cures so many things, so I put garlic in all my food, even extra garlic, it's just for well being too.

J: You took for sore throat? How did you take it?

S23: yes, mashed up like that in just a little bit of water, it was a lot, and I had to drink it all and it all made me hyperventilate it was so strong, it was just, it wasn't a burn it was like I could not catch my breath and I felt it down in here and it was strong. I drank a lot of water after that and some tea, 'te de limon,' and the next day I was well.

CH: How many cloves?

S23: I think it was 3 or 4 cloves in a half a glass of water, first mashed and made like in a same amount with a lot of water so that it would be very diluted just to drink afterwards but it's almost like when you have heartburn, it felt like that when I first got it.

CH: It is spicy.

S23: It's acidic, it's kind of citrus-y in a way. It's just very strong and that dosage raw, because there is very little water so that it would just pass by my...

J: How long before your sore throat wasn't so sore?

S23: Well, by the evening it was better, because I've had chronic bronchitis ever since I've been old so a cold really hits me and I was just feeling so ill and to tell you the truth, as a child I don't remember going to the doctor, we always had the home remedies even today, I'll go to the doctor for what I think is a lot (laughter) to tell you the truth, and I try to avoid any kind of drug or over the counter things. As I've become more knowledgeable, when I was younger I would take anything that was supposedly for that ailment but not anymore.

CH: So your mother relied a lot on Aloe Vera.

(Phone Rings) Tape pauses and resumes.

S23: I keep stepping on it.

J: So what where you asking her?

CH: I was asking about Aloe Vera, because you were talking about the plants that you had and that your mother relied on it a lot.

S23: Yes, because we would use it as an ointment but also to drink, she would just, for burns and skin problems, like I said, I had a lot of skin problems and one of my kids had eczema so she would use it for that, for years. And so, it's an important plant to me and I have, like I'm collecting, 'las plantas de mi madre,' like the songs. So, I still have more to collect and some of them were here already 'cause she lived in the front house for about 18 years before and then she died in 1991 and I've always lived next door to her, wherever she was I would live near by. And so some of the plant she had in her first house, she had a stroke in 1975 so then, she moved here because she couldn't climb the stairs where we were up in the hill and so many of the plants she had she had brought over here and then she just continued...she tried to replant or replace the ones she had left and so now she had many plants, many of them in pots, because she liked to have them in the front and so I have many of them and I still collecting this many that I remember so it's good for me to make my list because if I leave it to memory, I can't remember.

CH: Yes, it's a useful list.

J: How many plants do you have?

S23: I think I have about 40 or 50, of course I included all the plants but the medicinal plants are a little more than half. I started with 19 and then I didn't number any more so...

J: On the Aloe Vera, have you heard of it used internally?

S23: Yes, we drank it, we made like an 'agua fresca' the gel, you just scoop it out and you mix it with water and put it in the refrigerator, just water, it isn't thick because it's diluted and

J: What was the purpose of drinking it?

S23: It was just to, keep you healthy, it was for your blood but, I had, I guess I was kind of rickety, she says, because I was born during the depression and they didn't have...they had to have...I was always real skinny and my mother always gave me many types of tonics, the other, well, we used to have "magueys" in our yard, we had them here but they got a plague and there was a man that would come and cut them and get the 'agua miel' (honey water) scoop it up and fill up with the fluid and then she would give it to us and it...well it's called "agua miel" (honey water) but it is in no way sweet. It didn't taste like honey at all, I didn't like it...it was well, once it's fermented but that was, well that was collected, she would let him come to our yard but they had to leave at least a gallon of 'agua miel' (honey water). So he would leave it and she would keep it in the fridge and then she would give that to the kids so that they won't get so sick, but the kids didn't like it. And she would always say not to sweeten it because it isn't healthy, I don't know if it loses its properties. So, we would just drink a little glass but only when she would tell us because I didn't really like it. The Maguey is really important too, because for her it had a lot of uses besides the 'agua miel' which was a tonic but all the parts of the plants were important, they weren't to do with medicine but they were food and utility things and so she...and the neighbors would come and cut the big leaves and use them to line their barbecue pit so when you barbecue with a hole in the ground, we used to have a hole in the ground where we lived up in the hill but my mother would say that the roots were used for soap when she was a little girl and then the spines they were used. They were cut along the edge so to mend ripped cloth. But her background is from Yucatan where the 'Henequen' industry (Mexican Agave industry) and she says that her family, the men in the family worked in the harvest of the 'Henequen' (Mexican Agave). And then during the off seasons they would go to Guanajuato and work in the mines, eventually they settled in Guanajuato, so to her she called it the tree of life.

CH: I've heard that term before for the Maguey.

S23: Really?

CH: Yeah.

S23: I used it as an icon as an image in much of my work. That's one of them up there.

J: Oh, up there.

S23: That's one and then I did, an installation on the Maguey plant. So it was part of my upbringing we had a stand of Maguey's and 'nopales' (prickly pear). I didn't put down 'nopales' (prickly pears) but they are a great source of mostly the nutrition but the...the, well I guess some plants are called 'fresco' (cool) or 'caliente' (hot). I'm not sure which is for which but she said that 'nopal' (prickly pear) was cold category. And for menstrual cramps you just peel it and then put it on and it is kind of soothing and then it would get warm and you would put another one on.

CH: So are then menstrual cramps cold or are they hot?

S23: No, they are raw, you know. Just for the skin. So when you take the spines off you leave it exposed, the meat of it, you don't take, well, it's hard to take the skin off but when they get the 'penca' (leaf of maguey) and with a knife you go this way and you are taking off all the spines and you are leaving sections. But she would also try and cut it to leave the meat exposed and I remember she did that for someone she knew that would come and ask and she did that for her. I think I had it once, but I was pretty healthy, I never really had that problem myself.

CH: So, 'nopales' (prickly pear) are 'fresco,' cold.

S23: Yes

CH: And then you use that to put...

S23: For cramping.

CH: For menstrual cramping. Are menstrual cramps believed to be hot or cold? Is it, well, do you counter act hot with cold...

S23: Well, I think pain is hot, so it seems like. But it was interesting because the tomato, uh, I don't know what it's called and 'emplaste,' (poultice) is that a poultice? I don't know. Is a poultice cooked or hot? Well, anyway, the 'emplaste' (poultice) was for the fever but she either roasted them on the griddle and they were hot because I remember that they were really warm but it felt good on my feet, they were rapped with clean cloth, strips of cloth and sheets and left over night. But I was given something else, when they put those on me I was very young, I don't remember what it was I had to drink but in the morning I just felt wonderful, cool, I was just amazed to see the, they were almost formed, because my brother said it was like Frankenstein the mummy you know, but they were cooked, they were so stiff brittle and dark, the tomatoes. And they had been very moist of course because they had been opened but they were warm, that was to draw out the fever.

CH: Could you explain to me the process of preparing that, if you can remember that.

S23: I remember that she would have a griddle (comal) on the stove and she'd put all the tomatoes on there and they would start to sizzle and then you put, usually she would use

them to prepare the INAUDIBLE or anything because you could peel the skin, but this one was just to open them and they be warm. So, I guess, they would open so that they would be like this and then put them on this cloth that she had already, it was a large cloth, but then she had lots of strips ready then she rapped it around me like this and then started tying all these strips until it was very thick, but I was in bed. I just stayed in bed until the next morning and I remember my father helped her but it was my mother's remedy. I remember my aunts who lived nearby they all swore by that too and talking about yes, or my mother or someone underpassed, that's what they always used to do.

CH: Do you remember approximately how old you were?

S23: Well I was in a crib, of course I stayed in the crib until I was about 5 because we had a little tiny house and it was a metal crib and I remember when I was very sick I would wake up and my father would give me water and so that was very, it was, it was and intense treatment because I know that they were worried because they would touch me and then they would talk but I remember that and in later I would tell them that. In later years they did that for my sister, in fact, she remembered, we were talking about a remedy and she said, 'I don't remember going to a doctor, I think I went to a doctor when I was about 13.' Well, we were on welfare because my father got to be, well, so we were checked, so we would go to the clinic to get immunization shots or they would give us a tonic, a malt, but my mother always gave us cod-liver oil and a piece of orange.

CH: Cod-liver oil and a piece of oil?

S23: Yes, just for the taste but it was a daily thing and we took it.

J: Cod-liver is not very tasty.

S23: I think she would pit a little bit of salt and then we'd always had half an orange to eat after that, like drinking tequila except with an orange.

CH: Tequila too.

S23: We would take our dose.

S23: One time I got sick and I don't know who it was my grandma' or my great aunt and she said, take a shot of tequila, a shot of warm tequila and I would feel better.

CH: I used it and it works. I haven't used it in a long time because I have my children here all the time, I have my grandchildren only for the day. For Acid or indigestion, one of the immediate ones, because if you have slight diarrhea but mostly indigestion it would be the juice of a lemon in a glass and of course the bicarbonate of soda and she would put a little teaspoon of sugar and then it would fizz and we had to drink it really fast and then you'd burp out all that sour taste and that was it. My step dad when he had a bad cold, he would have, they call it 'fire water' (agua ardiente) and it's a tequila but its hot. They make cinnamon (canela) and then squeeze lemon and then tequila, but it was

like a little shot glass but sometimes, they would just say that they had a cold to have some tequila (laughter). But it makes you sweat, because they gave me that once, it makes you really hot and then supposedly it suppose to, the reason is that you sweat all those toxins out. I was telling my daughter that, because that's how she treats patients. That the toxins is what make you sick and vulnerable to other diseases and things that make you sweat are good, to get all that out. We used to get enemas all the time, that was done by the time I was eleven or ten, but my mother would say, 'Una lavativa' (a cleaning) but I just couldn't do it to my kids, I did maybe one on my oldest son but that's when, well, I don't like that. But most of them are purging the toxins out of your system and it's interesting because my daughter today, she bought some, she prescribes all these herbs for me because I have different, well, I'm pretty healthy but I have a lot of arthritic pains in my back and things like that, stomach problems so I take them daily and there, and she says that I can buy them in capsule form, but her boyfriend makes everything from scratch and he has bottles of lots of dried plants everywhere and it's easier for me just to take the capsules because it's a mixture of many things but it's to purge your system, it's to keep all the toxins out and I believe it works.

CH: You feel good?

S23: Yes, when I don't take them, I'm pretty healthy though and I attribute it to how I was raised, everything was natural, I never took drugs, you know as far as, well, of course in those days they didn't have that many but we had a lot of the food we ate, like watercress was for our blood, it was for our health, it was 'fresh water' (agua fresca) made out of the watercress and it was just let set in water for the next day and then it was sweetened a little bit, but it had kind of fresh sweet taste and then she would add chopped bananas and oranges to flow like a punch and it would turn kind of purple-ish, she would put cabbage and she would call it 'Ensalada' (Salad) but it's a drink, and with the cabbage overnight would turn purple-ish like a grape color, it was delicious. Sometime I would talk to my mother and put it in my mind and I ask how she made it because I'd like to go back to some of those, I haven't seen them in recipes but I think if I tried like I just said, because I was a kid I didn't make them but but I would watch her.

J: So the watercress plant was chopped up and let standing in water? And then other ingredients...

S23: Yes, and that's good for the blood, it's a like a tonic. So it was, it was in fact wild cress because up in these hills, Monterey hills, there is a creek and it would grow along the banks of that creek and they would send my brother or my aunts. I only remember going up there like twice but it was a walk and they would come back with all this, or they had the friends who worked in the agriculture bring back some fresh 'watercress' (berro) in a big bag, a burlap bag and they would distribute it to my aunt or someone else and then we'd have 'agua fresca'

CH: In El Salvador we have 'ensalada' (salad) too, but it's like a fruit drink it's not with watercress or anything.

S23: There was also 'Chia', do you know that, that is also done like that, I don't remember where she bought it because when I see chia I say, I wonder where they bought it.

J: She added these other ingredients to it?

S23: Mostly it was just that and the fresh fruit on it, I loved it that way.

CH: What was the Chia for?

S23: It's a drink also, exactly like the 'watercress' (berro), that was also a drink, but it's also good for your system they say, good for your blood too.

CH: All these good things.

S23: Lots of teas to drink and the lemon too, the lemon of course besides drinking it again you for the flu and all that, the kids didn't have it with tequila but we would have it as a tea and my mother would make the tea leaves and it would make you perspire but it was so good but very stimulating and so sometimes I used it in the winter when it's very cold and it just makes you feel good but it was also used with cinnamon (canela) and the leaves, well, that was for the kids when they had a cold (resfrio) and it would make you get really hot and then I deduced as an adult that not to put very many leaves because it was very stimulating so for kids I thought I would just dilute more because I never asked her how many leaves, I just kind of try to use my common sense and tried to use what is good and how much to put in or she would say just a few leaves. She never measured.

CH: It's always like that.

S23: She was an excellent cook, I was always trying to learn and it was well, I would try to ask how much is that but it was too fast for me, I never really learned the exact measurements. So everything was by ear.

CH: Feeling it out.

S23: Just knowing, just knowledge that isn't written down, a lot of that.

CH: I know, I have to just go and watch my mom cook, and it never comes out the same for me. I was just going to ask you how do you do it now that you can make your own teas?

S23: I do it the same way (laughter). Well when I make the teas, when they are sick or usually colds and shivers, chills, and stomach problems. Most of the plants I have are for that and for skin problems, I don't go beyond, well, most of them that's what they are, they are good for other things though. What was I saying, well I have 'mint' (yerba buena) I had (poleo) but some of my plants I had to replace, I don't have it anymore or it dried out or I had to take it out and it didn't grow back but 'mint' (yerba buena),

Mugwort (estafiate), Mexican tea/wormseed (epazote), Lemon Grass(te de limon), or Lemon Verbena(cedron), you know lemon balm. And then one thing I learned was, make a large, if it's for more than one day, like that it's like a matrix and then you dilute it, because if you let it steep it's very, very strong, the effects are very strong, so I don't know, so I just dilute it, I didn't know that before as I read more, and then a friend of mine from Mexico, told me to make a matrix and then you could keep that and each time you want to make tea you just use a half a cup of that with water and it's very strong, it gets very dark. And so, if it's for one cup for one time, I'll get a pinch a little florette of each, usually the combination for cold is the signal and what's good for the cold and the respiratory thing, is oregano. Oregano is a good one.

J: How do you use Oregano?

S23: You use it as a tea, I use it dry. It's a little different with the fresh one, it's not as strong for some reason.

J: I've noticed that with just using it to cook with it.

S23: It's lighter and I guess maybe because you tend to use more when it's dry I'm not sure, but it gets to be really dark versus if I put a tablespoon of the dry oregano in a really small sauce pan with two cups of water but I think not letting it boil too much because that makes it volatile, you know, very strong. It's very strong, and then I put it through a siv and then dilute it and make a cup, you can almost feel the sustenance, you know. That's for bronchitis type of cough and mix it either with phlegm or something like that.

J: How long do you take it?

S23: About twice a day for three or four days after a while you feel like you don't need it anymore. But initially, it makes you cough and bring up phlegm.

J: And is this ordinary oregano?

S23: Yes, that's what I use. I've never gone to an herbalist for any of the plants.

J: And do you dry the oregano yourself?

S23: Well, I bought it. But I have a friend who had a lot of oregano and she dried it for me and so I used that for a long time so that was home dried, but then buying it at the store in a big package, what you use for the cooking, I use that but it has a lot of, well it leaves a lot of sediment but, I suppose, I have, margarine and oregano are very similar and for me it's hard to tell the difference but I have oregano and I dry it mostly for cooking and so when I've had to, in fact when my granddaughter was sick last week, they don't take the teas. I tell them they have to, I make the tea for her, I dried it, I just put it on my shelf there, I just put them to let them dry. I made a tea and I put a little honey on it just for the taste you know, she took a little bit. But she wouldn't take it, they just don't, they aren't educated in, well, she's a teenager, maybe it's the stage, I like was.

J: Is lemon use for other things as well, for ailments?

S23: Well, one of the things, well, a lot of it too is, like after an illness that helps your system recuperates and my mother used it and I use it too, I used with lemonade but not with a lot of sugar, like lemon tea. I put it in everything but I haven't used it as a regiment of, but I've seen it I've been told, my mother would say take the lemon every day for, but everyday, but it's a process, you take it very strong like a tea, but lots of lemon compared to the ratio of water and then you reduce it, well you start increasing it for four days. You build it up to a certain amount of lemon, you don't just start off, because then you don't get the benefits she say and that's to recuperate, that was given to here in fact when she was in the hospital, ten years ago. So that was her recommendation for me, while I was the only serious bought of bronchitis, which I would get especially in my later years. But for anyone else she would say that you had to stay with it. That would be the treatment. And it would be a treatment of about a two-week period and then it would go down in a week.

CH: That was just the lemon juice or just lemon tea, as you explained earlier?

S23: It was the juice. Juice the lemon, so it wasn't a lot. You start out with half a glass but because it's so strong and I guess the most you would take is a glass but I think there was some dilution because it's sour, to make it palatable, put a little bit of sweetener, honey preferably.

CH: So honey is OK to use some times?

S23: Yes a little bit. But the lemon is always used for the cold. Cinnamon (canela) with lemon it's really good. Raw cinnamon stick.

CH: Do you remember when we were talking about 'Prickly Pears' (nopales) and you said they were good for nutrition and you used them for the menstrual cramps, did you use them for, or did your mom use them for any other ailments or any other way?

S23: For the skin. Very similar to the way 'Aloe Vera' (savila) was used but 'aloe vera' is used more to cure a sore or a rash something more serious I guess, but for the skin and the hair you put it in the water. I don't know if it was cosmetic but it was for your skin to feel good you know?

CH: And did you just use the 'prickly pear' (nopal) and put it on?

S23: Well, when you cook a nopal it exudes a very mucus like, so it's very sticky and gooey like, well that water we'd use it for your skin or your head, so we had a lot of remedies for things like this, like vinegar, natural things. I was remembering all those things, I still use vinegar for the hair and but only a little bit, because it's very strong and it puffs your hair up. It cleans. My kids said I looked like a lion, because I had really thick hair, but, huh, many of the things where used for other purposes, you know

cleaning, and I know vinegar was used for the lice. When we were kids we'd get lice, head lice. You just had to be careful with your eyes, but that's when, I had head lice when I was a kid and my mother used that, after that you shampoo and, but my hair got really nice and so I said that I would put some vinegar in the shampoo, I guess it would get it squeaky clean but it would lighten it, in fact it started giving me light highlights and then so I had to stop.

CH: But it made your hair light?

S23: Yes, it's very light and flowy, it felt good.

CH: It took the frizz out?

S23: Yeah.

CH: I'm going to do that too.

S23: Try it. Then you have, well, the smell is strong, then you would have to, well today they have conditioners, then we did not have them. The treatment is good for your hair. Another one that was for the hair was, my mother friends would come, up until she died, was for the guava (guayaba), she had to have these plants in her yard: the guavas (guyaba), the prickly pear (nopales), the maguey (maguey), aloe vera (savila), mint (yerba buena), well there is a list there. But the guava (guayaba) was for constipation, it's for intestinal problems and it stand to reason because it has all that seed. She would put it in the blender and make a really thick drink and it's really good, I still do that, I just really like it, but the leaves they would be made into an infusion and it would turn black and her friends would come for their hair, do darken their hair. And it makes your hair thick looking, kind of like henna, it has that effect, it's kind of resin-ie, and when it is let to stand it gets very dark almost like the walnut leaf.

CH: Lots of people, well, my friends use it to darken there hair.

S23: Right, I never tried it for that but it's to late for me. I'd have to use the whole tree (laughter). But it stands to reason that it leaves dark marks where ever it settles, just like the walnut leaf, but the walnut (nogal) it's self, the skin of the walnut is also a remedy, not to drink internally, it was for the skin, pimples/spots (granos), because we used to have much dirt around when we were kids.

CH: How would you prepare that?

S23: That was let to set in water, turn really black. I used to see that it would leave a stain on your skin a little bit, well where you manipulate it, like when you peel a walnut then after a while it takes a few days to, just like when I went to the harvest in Walnut, that's why it was named Walnut because of the orchard, the walnut trees. We didn't stay long we didn't have a car, my aunt would go and stay there with her kids and we'd go over there and join them for a few days. And when we'd go to school, lets say they went

on vacation and all there fingers would be stained and you would say, no you went to the 'piscas' you know it was a derisive kind of thing, but it's stings, it has a tenum (sp.??) I believe

J: I'm running out of tape here so let me change.

SIDE A ENDS

S23: My mother would say, may God compensate you and I would say, wow, God owes me a lot of things. I always joked because I remember her saying that. So when is He going to pay me, in good time, when I'm a good girl.

CH: My mom use to do that to me and then afterwards with my sister H-----, I use to tell H----- to do that and then she would go and do it and I would pay her 25 cents and it got to the point where I would pay them five dollars or something and then they grew up and became teenagers and they were like, 'what can you get for five dollars' they wanted more, like eight dollars an hour.

S23: I tell my kids, if I had a list of what my mom would say, may God compensate you, I'd be a rich lady now.

CH: ...may God bless you.

S23: Well that too.

CH: We could never leave the house with out her saying that, so if you're mom got mad at you and you left the house, you felt bad.

S23: Would you like water?

J: Not right now.

CH: I'm OK

J: You're the one doing all the talking so you're getting dry (laughter). I know for lecturing I always have a container of ice water in class because I dry out really fast from lecturing.

CH: Yes and at the end of the class we eat. Or during class.

S23: Are you off for the summer Mr. J-----?

J: Yes, thank heaven. So I can work on this, this is the fun part. I cant tell you how much fun this is, how much I enjoy it.

S23: I think it would be fun.

J: Teaching graduate students like her but not big lectures.

S23: That's interesting, well I retired three years ago from elementary school and I always taught art on the side, kind of on the side like a arts specialist thing and I've done a few gigs, one or two day sessions but now I do things on art and culture and things related to social studies but art, you know, the art perspective and so I got a call if I would be interested in teaching for the summer immigrant program. I worked in that program a few years ago and it would be for six weeks from 8 to 12, only four hours, first graders and all I had to do was teach art, and that's always what I wanted to do, then I told them I'd call them back. Then I said I don't want to teach everyday for six weeks, I like my life so I said that I was sorry and that I wasn't available. I'm teaching two sessions this week it's an outdoor setting, I hope the kids are better though, I had one last week and the kids were rude and disrespectful and I had to stop and I had to put on my teachers stands and said we could not go on, and how many of them wanted to go on and then I said well then we have to agree that your language and we have to respect each other, and then the stuff, young girls like you, it's almost like they don't hear things or they ignored it, or they feel they cant reprimand kids, I cant work if I hear that language.

J: How old were they?

S23: They were, the ones, the worst ones were six and seventh grade but there were younger kids, so it's a wide range, and it's not fun to do that, because you have to adjust to all the ages. I like the teaching part but I didn't like to put up with, I didn't put up with them, I said, I'm sorry but I can't go on, I have to get your word that you're going to respect each other.

J: When you mentioned garlic to begin with, have you ever heard of garlic being used in the ears, for earache?

S23: No, I have heard, but we never use it. It kind of stands to reason it's so strong, we use rue (ruda) and it was macerated with some implement to mash it so it would exude its oil or its juices. Then she would put a little bit of olive oil, I don't know why, but she'd put it with a little piece of cotton and then it would be absorbed into that and she would stick it in our ear.

J: It would relieve the earache?

S23: Yes, it's very. Well, rue (ruda) is also used to be put under the mattress and under the pillow for bugs.

CH: Really I've never heard that one before.

J: Just the twig of the plant?

S23: Lots of them, just lay them under the mattress or under the pillowcase or in the pillowcase on the side that you are not on. It's strong.

J: I've heard that pregnant woman need to be careful taking rue (ruda) is that because of abortion?

S23: I didn't know when I was a kid why, but you know things like that are strong, like mugwort (estafiate) and rue (ruda) were strong and today in some articles I've read of certain plants, yeah, well, it could be toxic but it was used in the tea. I was trying to remember the plants that I was, that I was given for that empacho (indigestion), I do remember the mugwort (estafiate) and third one was a little bit of rue (ruda), I remember that it was bitter and ugly and I thought that I would vomit although I didn't. But it was something, like desperation and I had diarrhea and I was dehydrated and it didn't go away and I had a terrible taste in my mouth, it was really bad and I hadn't gone to a doctor, and I don't remember what he gave me, I don't remember him giving me something.

CH: And you remember how much of that you had to drink?

S23: I remember it was a tea and it was a small cup and it was warm not hot and then I drank it again later, I don't know how many hours and it was kind of monitored, not in a measuring cup but it had to be very little, and it was followed with a tea, it might have been 'spearmint' (yerba buena), I remember it was really sweet in comparison to that.

CH: Do you remember how long you have to take that? For how many days?

S23: I think it was only two days and twice a day.

CH: Twice a day?

S23: Well I took it twice a day when I first (dog howls), Whitey! I'm sorry.

CH: It's ok.

J: He's protective.

S23: Yes. Sarah, I don't want to yell with this microphone here.

J: We can turn this off. OK so you take it as a tea, what, you said with Empacho (indigestion) you had diarrhea but...

S23: No, I remember I had diarrhea but remember I had vomiting.

J: And what did it feel like?

S23: It felt blotted, my stomach was hard it wasn't soft and it would sore to the touch and this lady she 'massaged' (sobó) it. It was a big treatment thing but I remember the drink itself.

J: How old where you?

S23: I was seven or eight.

J: Do you remember when you went to the doctor, your mother took you to your doctor, if your mother described it as empacho (indigestion) or not?

S23: She might have because it was something, and my mother said that the doctors don't believe in empacho (indigestion).

J: That's why I'm asking.

S23: I don't know what he gave me but it didn't help and so my mother said, let's just go to this lady who live on Carmenita, she was an old lady with darkish glasses and I guess she knew how to cure empacho (indigestion).

J: And was she the one who recommended the tea as well as did the massage?

S23: Yes, she had my mother bring, she told her what to bring, so my mother looked for the pomegranate (granada), we had a tree and she had them, but I guess she had some rinds (cascaras) because they were dry-ish they weren't dark but they were dry and my mother, when we lived in the house before we moved here, she also had a pomegranate (granada) tree and so those things were important to have around and well we had Marigolds, they were accessible and Mugwort (estafiate) we always had.

J: What else was Mugwort (estafiate) used to treat?

S23: Well, besides indigestion (empacho) but for more serious stomach problems, diarrhea, it was also used for like the nerves, fright (susto), well it's like shock, I couldn't remember what fright (susto) is, well I remember one of my mother's relatives when her dad died, she was an adult and they say she had fright (susto) because she wouldn't cry she was just in a stupor and they would say, and they would massage her head and so they made some Mugwort (estafiate) and I remember it because they got it from my mother's garden. Well it was grief but they called it like fright (susto) but it's some trauma, any trauma was susto and that one also seemed to be monitored, it seemed to be strong.

J: And that was given how?

S23: In a tea. Now there may have been other things in it, but I don't remember but only because, I don't know if it is because I remember Mugwort (estafiate) and that potion I got when I got indigestion (empacho) but I knew that it was a strong herb and so I used it

for stomach problems and I've had more of that than anything else, but I just use a, if I make it a little strong, but I just go by the color you know that it's not too dark and then just drink it and so what I've done now is just put it the fridge and make it like a tea because I think that maybe the freshness, the hot tea feels good too but if I'm going to drink more of it instead of heating it I just dilute it and drink it with ice and have a little bit as a drink, this way I can drink more of it because it's not, well I put mint (yerba buena) just to soften the bitter taste.

J: C----- what was that sweet flavor you said it was in the coffee, what is it called?

S23: Not fenelle (sp??)

CH: No, I thought you said something with a C

S23: (Piloncio)?

CH: Yes.

J: What is that?

S23: OH, yes, it's a concentrated raw sugar and it has a wonderful taste, in the Mexican stores they are like coned shaped and then you have to break them up and put them in water to dilute it and it looks syrupy but you only need a little piece to sweeten something, they use it in Mexican coffee with cinnamon (canela) oh, it's delicious but its, also used in (capirotada) and in (buñuelos), you make a syrup with it because its concentrated.

CH: What do they make it out of?

S23: It's just raw sugar, I'm not sure how they prepare it, they must cook it or because it's brown, in a way you can compare it to brown sugar but it's not crumbly it's a solid substance.

CH: It's a cone.

S23: Yeah, and so when you put it in water it starts to melt away and it's like syrupy and has the consistency of very strong coffee but when you cook it, it starts getting thick because it is sugar. It gets very thick but it's more like honey (miel) syrupy.

J: I had it in coffee, in a restaurant in Santa Barbara.

S23: Oh, that's Mexican coffee or they call it 'Café de la Hoya' (coffee from the pot), I love that, in that in the wintertime it's wonderful.

J: I drank two cups of it.

S23: It's strong and it's just so good, it has such a distinctive taste it's like burnt sugar taste and then with the cinnamon it's very good.

J: Speaking of, have you ever grown (stidia) (sp??)?

S23: No, I haven't, what is that?

J: I don't know. It's a leaf it's very, very sweet.

S23: Really, I have to find that out.

CH: It leaves a sweet taste in your mouth.

S23: you don't know what it is in Spanish?

CH: I don't know what it is in Spanish.

S23: That's the botanical name?

J: No, that's the common name, I looked it up on the Internet and found a lot of references to it. So it's well known. I know what the botanical name is but I think that was the common name given.

S23: I don't know that.

CH: Did S----- have some of that?

S23: Oh, is it available then?

J: No, it was up on the railing of a porch on a basket.

S23: S---- is the herbalist or the curandero, that you told me about?

CH: Yes. He has lots of plants in his garden.

S23: I would love to visit him. Where does he live?

CH: Not far from here, in Boyle Heights, he's Puerto Rican, so he knows different type of Caribbean types of herbs.

J: We should try to get the two of you together.

S23: I like to learn as much as I can.

J: You know, by the time we are done by the list of the plants you wrote here, we have a couple of lists from him, if we get the tapes transcribed, we put them together and see and

compare the two. I know that there is a lot of duplication, like Aloe Vera (savila) and some of the other ones.

CH: Pinel, plantain and (yerba del manso). That's another staple herb, the (yerba del manso) is very aromatic and the leaf, that one was used for my skin, in two ways. It was used the leaf, because it's a brought leaf, I think it's called the Snake Plant, well not the snake plant because that's San Severia, or the oh no, well, supposedly it grows on banks, it's very prolific on this side of my mother's house. Well, there used to be. There is a water faucet there, but I water it all the time because that's a good one to have, it was used, the leaves would be used, like she would mash them, she would beat them, sometimes she would put them on my arm, sometimes they were just paper because that was handy and tape it, and it would just soothe it. And then it was also boiled and made into a heavy tea and that also exudes a very thick, makes a thick tea, and then that was used as wash, to wash it over and it's very refreshing and I used to have, I don't know what I used to have. In fact my mother even took me to a Japanese doctor that was, and he gave me iron shots, make your body feel hot all at once, because it's iron shots. And there was this lady that she'd go to Tijuana and she'd get these vials and then my mother would say well he's too expensive and we'd go to Tijuana (laughter). And so, and maybe that's why I'm healthy, I don't know, but that plant was really refreshing. I remember that it felt good in my hair because of the aroma, in fact I used it as a teenager on my hair a couple of times, when I would put it on my arms, it was more like a rash, I might have been allergic to things, I'm allergic to the sun now and I get, my skin gets thick and itchy, so then I just in wetting my hair and putting that on it felt good and thick, like the henna in a way so it was very aromatic. So, the leaves themselves and then the, my mother said they had a lot of other uses but for us she used it for my skin and she said that for other uses they were for serious and I, I, I kind of think it was Venereal Disease skin problems because she would say that I was a child and I didn't have to know about those, so I surmised that it must have been something like that, because it was very, very beneficial and it felt very good, the healing.

CH: Do you know if it was ever ingested, taken as a tea or anything?

S23: No, I don't but I haven't found it in too many, because I did find it in, in, this book and it's called (manso), the botanical name was that but I haven't found it in any English books and I have some of those roadside herb plants. When I was in Arizona they had several out there and I think I found it in one but I can't find it in any other place, but I found it on the banks of a river in Arizona and we all harvested some and dried it, the people I was with, I was so surprised to see the (yerba del manso), many people just call it manso, but my mother would always say (yerba del manso).

J: How do you spell the last word?

S23: M-A-N-Z-O or S-O.

J: And the botanical name?

S23: Yeah, let me find it.

J: Yeah, lets, if it's that unusual and we have a name...

S23: Well, maybe it isn't in this book...Oh, it's not in this one, I thought it was in this one, I'll show it to you out there, it's one of my important plants and then the other one is...Oh, I remember too, well, I guess what had impressed me about the guava (guayava) was that it was thickening the hair, so that people with hair loss would use it, but that was one of the things. When you are losing your hair, when you have a lot of fine hair. But it maybe that it just thickens it and it makes it look like you have more. But it's good for the hair, because it feels good.

CH: I should tell my fiancée to try it.

S23: Really you should. And I don't have lemongrass (te de limon) anymore, so I'm trying to get that staple plant, that one also is a stomach and for soothing, to quiet your stomach when you have cramps or indigestion, also infusion. Well I started boiling everything but not letting it boil because it was, sometimes, especially the ones that we drank like frescas, they would just be left too be set in water overnight and then it would (inaudible) but, I put them in water just before it boiled so that, I'm not sure but I think the heat can change it's composition and then I let it steep, I feel that you burn in out all the benefits, although something you do boil. You add it to boiling water but, so, something's like lemongrass (te de limon), it's such, so mild that I just, do well with water that has been boiling at it, because the milder ones don't get as dark so I, the very strong plants like oregano and Mugwort (estafiate) and what was the other one, that get so dark Mexican Tea (epazote) and it's one that I use more in food but I've read it's very strong plant, you know (Kinapodium?), well I looked it up because I wanted to know what it was called in the English botanical or medicinal, they are very afraid of it, they say they shouldn't take it, well we've always taken it, but you know we don't just put a whole bunch of it and boil it, I just take a sprig...

J: Can you explain why?

S23: Oh, because it has, what do they call the, it has, kind of like Marijuana, it has, what do they call those, volatile, it has, I can't remember what you call it.

CH: Not nicotine?

S23: No, it's like anesthesia type of thing, anyway it has, that one, although I put it in the beans it's just because it's what we've always put in the beans, but I just put a sprig, you know, from the top the tender ones but when it's used for nerves or the other thing, cramps I think it was used, it was prepared like a tea, but not boiled and then as a matrix to drink more, so it's diluted it's time it's taken from the original.

J: And why do you put it in beans?

S23: Because it was said to, well, I know why, because it said that they don't give off as much gas (laughter) but it's almost become like just part of the cooking.

J: Is it in part the flavor at all?

S23: It has a strong flavor, but you can't detect it because it's so little that is used, that I use anyway but I think it gives the beans a different flavor, palatable.

CH: I don't know what Mexican Tea (epazote) looks like, is it...

S23: I have a lot of it, you know it's seems to be in the Mugwort (estafiate) family, it grows all over here.

CH: Almost like a weed.

S23: It is a weed. But I have it, well, now I have it everywhere, I guess it had always been around and then it went when it was pulled but it came back, so now I just leave it, only when I have too much of it then I'll cut it, but I don't pull it out anymore because I don't want to lose it. I lost it for a few years and then one day it just grew, well they have tiny little seeds and they just spread all over the place, it could be invasive too and it's very hardy. And it's called Kenapodium Abrosius, something like that. Ambrosia. But there are many varieties but it looks like nettle, it's a plant that is tall and has similar appearance.

CH: I wanted to ask you a little bit about Mint (yerba buena), you mentioned it, but do you have any particular remedies that your mom used? Or that you've used?

S23: Yes, it's a staple one for your stomach and to calm the nerves for colic and the other variety called (poleo) I don't have any, anymore, that tea we'd give to the baby for colic and just to soothe them. But it works the same for adults of course when my kids were babies it would be very mild, diluted, very soothing tea.

CH: How would you prepare it?

S23: That one I put water to boil and when it's boiled I put in the sprigs, but I make it a little thick because like I said I like to have more and then when you cover it and let it steep it I'll get very strong but if for a tea I'll drink it right then, you know, but the one that's left I'll put more water and let it steep in the pot and I'll boil it again and it's like you make more it's a matrix for more, you could have a whole pitcher full and it's very good cold as a tea, I don't sweeten it. And I've made sun tea with mint (yerba buena) It's just very refreshing of course and it's very mild and it's good for your stomach.

J: Well we've been here almost two hours CH.

S23: Really, wow, we didn't even finish.

J: I know we never finish the first time, but maybe come back?

S23: Yes, it's fun.

J: Next week at this time? Would that work or not?

S23: Yes. Next week I'm free I don't have any classes to do.

J: Next Tuesday at 10:30 and I'll keep my mind on my driving and not miss the turn here.

S23: Drink a lot of Mugwort (Estafiate) because when it's dry it's very aromatic, it's so interesting, the one that I have is very aromatic but the taste is very bitter, but then I also make sage bundles to burn, well I don't have, well the sage I have I'd rather use it for cooking because I had a hard time growing it and now that it's hardy I may use a little for burning but I use Mugwort (estafiate) and to me it represents my mother's teaching and to honor her, she's always part of my everything and so I use that. I just finally got another plant, a Fenel (sp??) I grew up with that plant all around, the hill that I told you where I lived before. We lived on this hill, just down the way. It's still wild everywhere. We used to chew it if you had a little bit of bad breath, that's what it was for you know, just chewing a little sprig it was very, it's like licorice.

CH: Mugwort (estafiate)?

S23: No, Fenel (sp??). But that was also for the stomach and that one you could almost feel, it's very soothing and then it's also used to eat to put it in salads, you know I do too.

J: (mumbles)

S23: Yeah, I do too. So it's a very beneficial plant and there is so much where I use to live, because it was my mother's property up there and it just grew wild and here I think I just had it among plants that I water too much and it just didn't work so now I put on the side where the ground is very hard and so I hope it survives because that's a plant that I have to have too. I have two little plants.

J: Why did you say you use aromatics in the altars?

S23: So that it would be visual and central. And for me it's a combination of all the things I do as part of my mother's upbringing, I mean teaching, and part of what I am, who I am and so I use the Mugwort (estafiate), the Andurenains and those were also used for things, the leaves, you know they are very aromatic and they were used also for the skin, I think for bites, mosquito bites, I can't remember. So, but I never used them, you know I remember that as a child but anyway I like them, I use them too for the leaves and when they are dry, well, I tie them before they dry because they get really crumbly and so then I just crumble the things I have and I just put them on the ground all over the place so it has some scent. I want to put one up at the Japanese American museum, I'm excited about that project it's a wonderful project, Mary is involved in that one.

J: What is it?

S23: I'm not sure when it opens, but I think its from late august all to next year and there going to...oh and the History of Boil heights the Jewish community, the Japanese community, the Mexican community, well there were other immigrants, Russian, I guess they were Slavs, Italians but mostly the main three where the Mexican, Jewish and Japanese and so each month they are going to have some display to honor that culture and so they ask me to do an altar for November.

J: We look forward to seeing you.

S23: It will be a very interesting, good show.

J: Well, we don't want to exhaust you.

S23: Well do you want to see some of the plants, the Mexican Tea(epazote), I have it everywhere, well on the way out, we could, I'll walk you.

J: What we'd like to do on another occasion, after we know more about what plants you have on another occasion is videotape and remote microphone up to you.

CH: I'll carry that.

J: Actually I have a remote now, I ordered one and they send it, well we'll remote you and you'll tell us what the plants are and whatever else you have to say about it, so that we get it on videotape but then also some still photographs and slides.

S23: Oh that will be nice.

J: So we have two different types of documentation.

S23: That's good.

J: And depending on what the plants are, why, we might ask for a sample of the plant to take to B---- P---- to have him identify it, the botanical name.

S23: Well, definitely that (Yerba del Manso) I'd like to get that cleared.

J: Are you growing it here?

S23: Yes, on the way out you'll see it, it's on the side of the house. It only thrives there it seems

TAPE ENDS